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## NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

THE FOUNDING OF NEW ENGLAND. By James Truslow Adams. Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press.

The new scholarship which has gone so abundantly into the making of Mr. Adams's volume is not merely a matter of detail; it is largely a matter of broad views derived from a better knowledge of facts; and the result of it is not merely that from this book one gains a more accurate knowledge of New England history, but rather that one learns from it, in the largest sense, incomparably more than one can learn from the shorter accounts contained in larger works.

The effect of the book upon one's conception of the history of New England are mainly two: first, that one is enabled to see this history all as part of one process, and, secondly, that one is constrained, however reluctantly, to give up one's faith in what may be called (with due reverence) the New England myth. These general results, like most historic generalizations, have in themselves no particular value. Bare ideas such as these cannot be used, like scientific conclusions or mathematical formulas, as the basis for practical deductions. But in connection with a wealth of facts brought forward by Mr. Adams's thorough research and described in his clear and arresting phraseology, these general conclusions become illuminating.

"Apart from any political or religious motives, America was as certain to be colonized in the early part of the seventeenth century as it was to be discovered by Columbus, or someone else, in the latter part of the fifteenth." Moreover, the English colonies were primarily business ventures, and as such were but "episodes in the expansion of English commerce." Not merely the impulse of the "adventurers" to found colonies overseas, but the willingness of British subjects to emigrate to America rooted in the same cause; for it was neither over-population nor religious persecution so much as displacement and disturbance of population due to changing economic conditions that furnished the material for colonization. Religious motives and high ideals of various sorts had their part in the founding of New England—a part which the author shows no disposition to ignore;—yet one must not lose sight of the fact that "the planting of the first permanent colony in New England was due to a desire for gain on the part of ordinary business men, who risked a large sum, and made heavy losses, as well as to the higher motives of some of the actual emigrants." It is interesting, also, to note in this connection that the capital which made the enterprise of the Pilgrims possible was practically all subscribed in London, and that "of the first emigrants but a third belonged to Robinson's congregation, while in the entire Pilgrim movement to America,

only a dozen or so persons, at most, can be even remotely traced to the neighborhood of Scrooby." So that without underrating the Puritan influence for good (and evil!) in the colonies, one may say that the conception of the Pilgrim venture as the accomplishment of a compact little body of religious fanatics, is a bit romantic.

Just as inevitable as the colonization and subsequent settlement of America was the growth of the idea of empire, not only in England but in all the principal nations of Europe during the seventeenth century. Mercantilism—the universal theory of empire-building, however it may have been discredited, in these later days, as an economic fallacy—served a necessary purpose as a means of consolidating the larger units and of promoting trade and spreading civilization. It is useless to cavil at it, for it was one of the influences essential to the preservation of the colonies themselves. "It has too frequently been assumed," writes Mr. Adams, "that the Navigation Acts of the seventeenth century were a colossal blunder, because, in part, the commercial policy of England lost her the continental colonies in the eighteenth. Those who would commit themselves to such a view might well determine whether, had England not made use of the weapons of the earlier century, and thus developed that naval power which alone enabled her to protect her American possessions, she would have had any colonies left, continental or other, to be kept or lost by any policies which she might adopt in the later period."

It is likewise true that the colonies were certain, as they grew in strength, to regard their own interests as more and more independent of those of the empire. "The germs of the conflict were present from the very beginning. The forces which brought it about were operative in varying degrees, not only in North America, but throughout the entire empire, and extended back to its unconscious inception." But we are scarcely warranted in regarding this conflict of sentiments and of economic interests as a struggle between liberty and despotism!

Thus, while not denying the potency of the ideal of liberty, among other high motives, as a factor in progress, the author leads us to look upon the founding of New England as a mixed phenomenon determined in large part by impersonal causes—a view which certainly strikes one as more just and enlightened than the assumption that those who strive for independence must always be right. Economic conditions brought about the discovery of America and the colonization of the New World; they made the English colonies dependent upon England, and England in some ways dependent upon them. The English—partly, it is fair to assume, from disinterested motives and partly for selfish reasons—desired to control the colonies; the colonists—partly from noble motives, but also in large part for selfish reasons—desired to be as independent of the home government as possible, and in fact a little more so than was really possible. Under these circumstances, would it not be a foolish reading of history to regard every act of colonial insubordination or self-assertion as a step in the realization of the great ideal of Liberty?

"If the nations of the world are to grow in mutual understanding and brotherly feeling," writes Mr. Adams—in words deserving especial emphasis because they so well define the real aim of history and the ultimate effect of truth—"their histories must be written from the standpoint of justice to all, and not from that of a mistaken national piety." Such a view may well reconcile us to the loss of a little of that excessive reverence for the Puritans generally, and for the Puritan leaders in America in particular, which has been assiduously inculcated in the past. Moreover, truth to say, the Puritan myth, when confronted by the facts is seen to have been somewhat tiresome; and to get rid of what bores us is also undoubtedly a gain. One may suspect that the Athenians banished Aristides, who, with all his faults, was said to be the perfectly just man, not so much from jealousy as from a secret conviction that "there ain't no such animile." Similarly, though we may well be grateful for the effect of Puritanism as a social leaven and may well rejoice in certain individual examples of Puritan virtue, it is a relief to be assured that no such State as the Puritan colony of Massachusetts is sometimes represented to have been ever really existed. For one thing, if Puritanism and sturdy virtue are in any degree synonymous, we must admit that we ourselves are neither sturdy nor virtuous; and if Puritanism, though intolerable in itself, was the mother of our virtues, we have some difficulty in conceiving how an ugly bigotry can have given birth to lovely things.

Mr. Adams's chapter on "Some Aspects of Puritanism" is enlightening. In England, he shows, the Puritans were always a small minority—a minority useful in counteracting the lax moral tendencies of the time, but unfit to rule. Their estimated numbers are greatly swelled by the fact that ten landlords, induced by religious or other motives to number themselves with the Saints, could bring at least fifteen thousand persons nominally into the Puritan fold. This minority was well-organized, vocal, and zealous, and in consequence it has won for itself more sympathy than it perhaps deserved. As a matter of fact, it was often a profitable thing to turn Puritan, and sympathy might often be more justly bestowed upon the sincerely conforming clergyman who had to content himself with a mere pittance than upon his Puritan rival, who was for the most part quite handsomely provided for.

The dark side of Puritanism was not merely its bigotry and the astonishing hardening of the heart that went with it—there were also hypocrisy and the indirect encouragement of drunkenness and of sexual immorality resulting from the suppression of natural instincts. But it was his intolerance that made the Puritan conspicuously unfit to rule—and this intolerance was deep-seated and incurable. Every one of the Saints professed to guide himself solely by the will of God, and of God's will he was the only interpreter both for himself and others. In reading Mr. Adams's masterly account of the Massachusetts theocracy one is fairly astounded to see how tenaciously this view was held and to what extremes it was carried.

The plain fact, then, is that in Massachusetts especially, and to some

extent in other parts of New England, the people were ruled for over half a century by a peculiarly narrow and intolerant oligarchy. Nor was Puritanism the principal factor in the growth of the colonies that held it as a State religion. During the period of "the great migration" (1630-1640), it is estimated that the emigrants bound for Puritan colonies were outnumbered three to one by those who went to other settlements, and, further, that "not more than one in five of the adult males who went even to Massachusetts was sufficiently in sympathy with the religious ideas there prevalent to become a church member, though disfranchised for not doing so." When it is added that, despite all that has been written about town meetings, there is little evidence, according to Mr. Adams, to show that the New Englanders were more interested in government than were the people of other colonies, it will be seen that the value of the Puritan influence as such may be easily exaggerated.

So far as liberty is concerned this influence was hostile; for the real struggle for liberty that went on during the period covered by Mr. Adams's volume was not the inevitable controversy between the colonies and the mother country, but rather the resistance of the colonists to the Puritan domination. Thus it was not a misfortune but a blessing that Massachusetts became a royal colony. "What the English government granted was a charter by which the colony took her natural place, indeed, in an empire without whose protection she was defenseless, but which, at the same time, gave to her citizens a degree of self-government and political freedom which the theocratic group would never have been willing to concede." And the striking conclusion of it all is that the elements most typically American in colonial institutions were, in the case of Massachusetts, "forced upon her leaders, fighting to the last ditch against them, by an English king who could hardly speak the language of his subjects."

Thus, Mr. Adams's book, besides being entertaining on every page, does actually give one some insight into the way in which historic events come about and of the complex of causes that underlies the reasons men offer in explanation of their acts. The treatise is admirable for its clearness and comprehensiveness. The mind of an unbiassed, scientific historian is like a lens which receives rays of light coming from many different directions: the difficulty is to focus all the different lines of thought. Commonly we are aware of an increased illumination, a gathering in of the light toward a point; but all too often the picture appears to be a little blurred. The generalities are so very general that they are also vague. Mr. Adams, however, brings his ideas to an unusually sharp focus.

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HERBERT BEERBOHM TREE: *Some Memories of Him and His Art*, collected by Max Beerbohm. New York: E. P. Dutton and Company.

Just what a skilled biographer would make of such materials as are collected in the volume that Max Beerbohm has made in memory of his brother,